

## Handout Three

### Writing Good Questions<sup>1</sup>

#### *Tips*

1. Make sure your question is one dimensional (i.e., asks about one issue)
2. Check that your response options are all inclusive *but* mutually exclusive
3. Be sure your question has no presuppositions about your respondents (e.g., their knowledge about an online resource)
4. Check that the question does not imply a desired response
5. Avoid rank-ordered questions; use rating scales instead
6. For rating scales
  - use labels for each value
  - have 4-point scales to force respondents to express a positive or negative position or opinion
  - have 5-point scales if you believe the respondents will have no opinion. Use terms like “neutral” or “neither agree or disagree.”
  - Avoid labeling your mid-point as “fair” or “adequate.” Neither term is completely neutral.
  - Include a “don’t know/not applicable” option on 5-point scales so those with no knowledge do not choose your middle point.
  - Have an equal balance of positive and negative options.
  - Keep question layout linear (vertical or horizontal). Do not double-bank options to save room.
7. Consider the flow of your questions – does one follow comfortably from previous question?

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information about writing survey questions, see *Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach Projects, Collecting and Analyzing Data*, pp 5-9.